

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TO INSURE FISHING OPPORTUNITIES – THE VIEW FROM IDAHO

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Idaho has a high quality fishery resource that has not been as greatly affected by man's activities as has occurred in some of the more populous western states. Ownership (64 percent Federal) and the extremely rugged terrain have prevented degradation. An exception is the State's anadromous fishery resources. Construction of hydroelectric dams played a major role in reducing populations of Idaho salmon and steelhead. Much of Idaho is in an undeveloped state which in part explains why Idaho does have a high quality fishery resource.

Idaho can avoid many of the mistakes that have been made in more heavily populated states and allow for preservation of quality fishery habitat in the growth and development of the State. The projections for growth in Idaho indicate that the population of the State will increase at a rapid rate in the near future. Unless proper safeguards are established, the high quality environment that is drawing large numbers of people to Idaho will be destroyed by those people and their activities.

Establishing the necessary safeguards for protection of fisheries is a difficult and complex task. A mandatory requirement is a positive attitude. Idaho Department of Fish and Game is approaching the problem positively by clearly defining plans, goals, objectives and policies for the future.

For the purpose of this presentation, the fishery resources of the State will be divided into three major groups: (1) Large lakes of the northern Panhandle country; (2) Wild Rivers and wilderness of mountainous central Idaho; (3) The Snake River Plain.

The Panhandle country is characterized by a preponderance of lakes and heavy rainfall. Trophy-size trout, kokanee, and largemouth bass provide abundant fishing opportunities for North Idaho residents. Dividing the catch will be major emphasis for future management.

Central Idaho is characterized by extremely rugged terrain, granite soils that are unstable, and large rivers draining high quality watersheds. Major problems are protection of wilderness classification of the area, maintaining naturally-produced wild stocks of salmon and steelhead, maintaining wild trout fisheries and degradation of habitat through logging activities. Preservation of the natural conditions with regard to habitat and wild fish populations will be the theme for future management.

The Snake River Plain in southern Idaho is an arid land that is rapidly changing through irrigation development and urbanization. The major problem in this area is the large influx of people that is occurring now and is expected to continue into the near future. Stream flows are severely depleted and additional consumptive uses are being planned. Intensive management of existing reservoirs could supply the additional fishing opportunities for the future. Warm water game fish and nongame fish can provide fishing opportunities for many people in the future in southern Idaho. Productivity of southern Idaho aquatic habitats is very high. Necessary laws to protect minimum stream flows will be supported. Dams have eliminated salmon from southern Idaho and have greatly reduced sturgeon populations. Attempts to shift angler preferences will be important in southern Idaho.

In summary, Idaho will provide a variety of angling experiences in the future through aggressively seeking implementation and public support of stated plans and objectives.

